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ABSTRACT

Undergraduate introductory sociology courses should actively engage students in learning the concepts, theories, and research methods that comprise the core knowledge of the discipline. The course should introduce the social theorists Durkheim, Marx, Mead, and Weber. Social concepts of the human group, social system, and social organization; structural social inequality; socialization and social change; industrialization; urbanization; and the demographic transition should be included. Methodologies should cover social facts, concepts, generalizations, and hypotheses; variables; participant observation, questionnaires, and use of local records; reading and constructing percentage tables; and sampling. Students should be able to see the world sociologically, understand the policy implications of sociology, consider sociology as a possible major, and see the relationship between sociology and work. Course materials such as Durkheim's suicide study, for example, can introduce a variety of concepts at different levels of abstraction as well as methodological issues. Blau's "Dynamics of Bureaucracy" introduces the complex organization through functional theory, a range of methods, and the interplay of formal and informal groups. Marx provides an opportunity to distinguish between social theory and research on the one hand and social action on the other. Strategies should involve games and simulations, short papers on newspaper and magazine articles, essay exams, and a term paper. (KC)

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NIBBLING AT THE CORE

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Let me begin with a tale of changing times: in the winter of 1974 I was chair of the Department at the University of Connecticut. I was also teaching a seminar, HELPING PREPARE GRADUATE STUDENTS TO TEACH. One of the activities in which we engaged was to discuss whether or not there was a common core of knowledge in sociology, and if there were, whether and how much should be taught in an introductory course.

As I pondered our discussions one evening, I decided that perhaps the issue was one that the whole department should address. So I sent a memo to the Undergraduate Program Committee asking it to address the question of whether there was a core of knowledge, and if there were, should we be making an effort in our department to insure that our introductory courses included something of that core.

The times were out of joint, as I discovered. The undergraduate committee that year included four faculty members, an undergraduate and a graduate student. As it happened, a majority of the committee had strong Marxist/conflict/critical theory orientations. They decided that

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I was attacking them and implying that they should be teaching Durkheim rather than Marx. They demanded and got a Department meeting at which I was asked to prove that I was not attacking their right to teach what they wanted. Meanwhile, the functionalists were sure I was attacking them, while another faction said people taught best what they knew and should not be required to teach any core if the core did not happen to coincide with what they were capable of teaching. It was finally decided that it was inappropriate for me to even bring up the subject. So I gave up the effort.

Despite this experience, I have continued to believe that there is a common core, and that students should be asked to at least nibble at the core in the introductory course. So it is with pleasure that I accepted the opportunity to address the matter in this paper.[1]

Finding the Core.

Let me begin by returning to 1974 to pick up on the assertion by one of my colleagues that "you teach what you know." That sounds very reasonable, even persuasive at first hearing. But on reflection, it seems to me to beg the question, What is it that a sociologist knows, or ought to know? And further, it seems to me that the assertion if accepted, prevents us from ever being able to have any expectations about the content of any course unless and until we know who the person teaching it is. That idea also troubles me because it has such an individualistic bias to it.

To paraphrase a well-known aphorism:

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1 To a considerable degree, Goldsmid and Wilson have taken the initiative with regard to the question of what the content of an introductory course should be. PASSING ON SOCIOLOGY (C. A. Goldsmid and E. K. Wilson; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1980) should be required reading for anyone serious about discussing this question.

> "in some respects the knowledge each of us possesses is unique; further, each of us knows what at least some other sociologists know; and on some matters the knowledge I possess, all sociologists possess".

But in fact, is this latter statement true? Do we all share some knowledge that is called sociology? And, if we do, is this the knowledge that ought to be included in an introductory sociology course?

My answer is an unequivocal "yes," there is a core of knowledge that expresses the basic, essential part of sociology. And, moreover, this core, which expresses the essential meaning of sociology, should be made available to the students who sign up for introductory sociology. They should be invited to nibble at it at least. I say nibble, for in a one-semester course, that is about all that can be expected of most students.

This core consists of concepts, theories, and research methods and is exemplified by a variety of research findings that have accumulated over time. Undergraduate students are capable of digesting at least some of the core, if the class setting emphasizes active learning and effective pedagogy. Thus, as I have addressed the issue of the core during the past decade, I have gradually come to the conclusion that how we teach the core is as important as what we teach. The two have become intertwined. I will try to illustrate the nature of this relationship, as I describe the core.

In admonishing us as to his hopes for this session, Wilson urged that we stay within the realm of the possible and believable. So I am not trying to design a course for an elite of intellectuals. I have in mind

a course that is aimed at the great body of students who attend the public universities of this country, and who have only a modicum of curiosity about sociology. But let me be very careful here. I would not change the core to match up with the audience. Rather, I am concerned about how much the core students can be expected to digest in one semester. For me the core remains the same, whether I am teaching an honors section, or a section for slow learners.

The introductory course should provide a general overview of the field. This allows the students to nibble, to obtain a variety of tastes, and to begin to develop their own tastes. I want to allow the students the broadest possible introduction to the field.[2] We as sociologists know enough about socialization to appreciate its "coercive" nature. Our obligation is to inform them of the field, and to encourage them by a variety of means to investigate its possible implications. We may even inform them of our own intellectual predilections, as long as we do not allow these predilections to be dogmas that must be accepted as THE CORE.

The overwhelming majority of students take only one course in sociology. What can we provide them in that one course that will give them a glimpse of how we begin to counter the strong individualistic view of the world which is so much a part of their cultural heritage? As Wilson has so aptly put it, sociology can challenge "vulgar views of the social world, . . . give the learner a different view of social reality, . . . and have important policy implications . . ." among other things. The way to

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2 By broadest possible introduction I mean theoretical and methodological. I want students to understand and distinguish between conflict, functional and symbolic interaction theories, as well as to distinguish between participant observation and sample surveys, for example.

do this, I conclude after 27 years of trying, is to realize and begin by admitting that the what or content of the course cannot be separated from the how or from in which we teach. I would reiterate, how we teach is as important as what we teach. What we teach is a necessary condition for learning, but it is not sufficient. How we teach it determines how sufficient it is. Put simply and bluntly, passive learning is the problem; students who are lectured to and then tested by multiple choice examinations don't learn much sociology. They can't really nibble even. In fact, in that situation, it is not the core that is important, but only the answers to the multiple choice questions.

The way to insure that students will have their views challenged, and develop different views of the social world in which they live, is to engage them actively in doing sociology. This idea is hardly new to me; in fact, it was expressed in much more eloquent terms by Wilson a few years ago in a keynote address to the ASA Section on Undergraduate Education.* I would urge you to dig it out from your files and read it carefully. The idea is developed at length in PASSING ON SOCIOLOGY, cited previously in this paper.

In another context, Bill Gamson has argued that "It's apparently true that most people in policy-making roles take in their ideas more through conversations and oral presentations than through reading well-constructed, tightly argued, and inevitably lengthy position papers." (ASA Mimeo. re Policy Planning.)

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* Wilson, E. K., "Sociology: Scholarly Discipline or Profession". A statement read at ASA Meetings, Chicago (September 8, 1977). Washington, D.C.: ASA Teaching Resources Center.

I would argue that Gamson is also talking about how most students learn, in any critical, liberal arts sense. I would simply apply Gamson's principle to introductory sociology. If we want students to begin to think sociologically, and to use sociological theories and methods in a useful way, we must encourage conversation and oral presentations (read dialogues between teacher and students and among students themselves).

The Core in Brief.

There are a variety of ways to engage the students actively, and I will elaborate on them shortly. At this point, let me outline what I consider to constitute the core of sociology that belongs in the introductory sociology course.

Theorists and Their Theories

1. Durkheim, Marx, Mead and Weber
2. Functionalism, Conflict, Symbolic Interaction

Social Concepts

1. theoretical -- the scuff of sociology, as embodied in the seminal writings of these theorists and developed by others is found in:

   a. the human group (primary and secondary), the social system, social organization

   b. structured social inequality, including inequality that is built into different economic and political systems. Thus, class, status and power, ascription and achievement, and mobility are all vital parts of this conceptual package.

   c. socialization, with its focus on the social nature of the self, role learning and the place of the individual within the group, deviance and social control.

   d. social change, industrialization, urbanization and the demographic transition, and bureaucracy as a way of life. The growing tension between the micro and macro levels of reality.

2. the methodological, also the stuff of sociology, to some extent embodied in the writings of the founders, but also and to a greater extent derived from the leadership of Lazasfeld, Rossi and others.

a. social facts, concepts, generalizations, hypotheses and theories

b. variables (dependent, independent and intervening)

c. participant observation, questionnaires and interview schedules, use of local records

d. reading and constructing percentage tables

e. sampling

There is nothing unique about the above outline. The great majority of introductory sociology texts include most or all of the items I have just listed.* Of course, how these items are treated varies greatly, and that brings me to a number of questions with which I have struggled over the years.

1. Are all of these ideas, theories, concepts, methodological issues equally important, or at least sufficiently important that I should try to introduce them into the introductory course?

2. Even if I decide that they are, is it realistic for me to try to cram them into a single semester? Isn't there a danger of superficiality setting in?

Perhaps I have answered those questions in my goals for the course. I want students to --

a. see the world sociologically, to develop the

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* See "A First Statement of Minimum Essential Learnings for Sociology 51," Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1 June 1978, 12 pp. Mimeo. The paper contains a summary of department faculty opinion on the essential elements of an introductory course in sociology. There is close congruence with the outline presented above.

rudiments of a sociological imagination;

b. see the policy implications of sociology;

c. consider sociology as a possible major;

d. see the relationship between sociology and the world of work in two senses:

(1) a critical awareness of the world of work, the structure of work roles, organization of work, and

(2) that sociology provides the basis for several types of occupations.

I want them to see the sociological in the classroom itself, in the world outside the classroom in the daily newspaper, in the weekly news magazine, in the events of their domitory. I want them to understand that if in the spring and summer of 1983 a large number of seniors graduating from college don't find jobs, it will have less to do with their personal motivation, inner character, good genes, and more to do with their family contacts, the state of the economy, and the opportunity structure resulting therefrom.

The core and ideology.

Whether one is trying to explain to students what Marx meant by class and class consciousness, or Durkheim by social cohesion, or even how to read the latest Gallup Poll on attitudes toward abortion, it seems inevitable in the introductory course that students are going to evaluate the material at hand in terms of their own values, beliefs and prejudices. The difficulty I have encountered over and over again, with bright, average and weak students, is that the empirical evidence we use to illustrate

core concepts or theories, is inevitably evaluated by the students. They lose sight of the core ideas or principles as they become engaged (often enraged) by research findings.

For our part, we as instructors are also often tempted to be more interested in preaching the findings than in focusing on the theory, concept or research method.

For example, I recall the difficulties I had in trying to get students to focus on the theoretical and methodological aspects of the Deutsch and Collins study of "Interracial Housing." To me the important theoretical idea focused on status equal interaction, and the methodoligical issues included the comparative study of integrated and segregated housing projects. But in the 1950's, a large number of white students immediately read this study as a challenge of their values and beliefs. Indeed, in class during the discussion of this study, one student straight out asked if I was "a nigger lover."

From my personal ideological viewpoint, this is precisely the kind of study I like to use, because it combines theoretical and methodological issues and has public policy implications. We have the obligation to challenge them with the best evidence available on core issues, and at the same time, we should not try to force them to accept our view. Given the power of the instructor, there is an almost inevitable tension created when we assert that sociological knowledge may be superior to common sense knowledge or prejudice. They may continue to say, "I don't care what the facts are, I don't like them," but we must find the variety of ways to present the facts, and to move to the concepts and theories beyond the facts.

Elements of the core: a bit of detail.

Let me in the remaining pages attempt to explain in more detail a few key elements of the core as I have found them, and then urge the importance of the how.

Durkheim's suicide study has long seemed to me to be an almost perfect core item. It allows us to introduce a variety of concepts at different levels of abstraction: thus, we can begin with a comparison of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish suicide rates; or male and female, young and old. These are concepts students use on a daily basis, and they are all central concepts to sociologists. Then, we move them from these easy to comprehend concepts to more abstract concepts like altruistic and egoistic and anomic suicides. And then we show how a general theoretical idea like social cohesion links the three suicide types. More than that, since the great majority of students still trace their roots to one of these three religious groupings, it is not too difficult to get them to seek in their own lives for evidence of different measures of cohesion.

Then we come to the methodological issues: and here we now have Whitney Pope's critique of Durkheim's study. But we also have other studies, and we have demographic tables comparing suicide rates by region of country, age, sex and race. It is easy to engage a large number of students in hypothesis construction in the classroom. And to challenge all of them to see suicide in a new way -- sociologically rather than psychologically. And social cohesion has been introduced as a central concept, along with comparative analysis, and methodological concerns.

For me, Whyte's Street Corner Society and Liebow's Tally's Corner are additional core materials. They allow for the continued development of the social cohesion concept, with important comparative analyses of group structures. And they introduce the method of participant observation. So early on, we can show the students that there is a continuum of methodological approaches which yield sociological knowledge even while focusing on the same theoretical idea (social cohesion).

To continue the development of functional theory and at the same time to present a comparative focus on the social nature of people, I find anthropological studies like those of the Hopi, the Zuni, the Trobrianders and the Nomads of the Long Bow very helpful. The mother's brother relationship in a matrilineal society shows not only how rules, roles and relationships may vary between societies, but also can be used to encourage students to look for functional equivalents in their own society. Thus, is the athletic coach, or the scoutmaster in some ways a functional equivalent of mother's brother? How are roles modified over time? What is their impact on social cohesion? Again, these studies present variations on methodological approaches to sociological knowledge.

One of the key features of contemporary society is the complex organization. And it is a core part of my introductory sociology. One of the classic studies that I continue to find useful is Peter Blau's Dynamics of Bureaucracy. Not only is it an outstanding example of the besting of functional theory, combining a range of methods (use of local records, observation, and structured interviews), and the interplay of formal and informal groups to the achievement of cohesion in complex organization. And we gain some idea that the individual is not simply an automaton within the bureaucratic organization.

But if cohesion and functional theory are core ideas that should be introduced from the very beginning, so also is conflict theory. Just as the media headlines herald the achievements of Russian and U.S. space ships (classic examples of functional interdependence), so also do the headlines tell us of conflict in Northern Ireland, Israel-Lebanon, Iran-Iraq and Poland. How are we to understand these conflicts? And how are they to be distinguished from other kinds of conflict in society? There

is for example the conflict that takes place on the athletic fields, and between political parties in campaigns. These kinds of conflict can be understood within a functional perspective. But the former are at the other end of the continuum, and are best approached within a Marxian perspective. Like all sociologists, Marx was concerned about the way social structures shaped individual behavior. His special contribution to sociological theory, as Coser has pointed out so clearly,* is that he focused not on the symmetrical elements in social relations, but on the assymmetrical. He was concerned about the differential access to scarce resources which people had depending on their place in the social system. And he was in particular concerned with this access in the economic sector. I see this concern as another part of the core.

Further, Marx systematically pointed out how individuals in the factory situation overcame concern with their own self interests, and came to develop collective interests. Thus, we understand how people's position in the relations of production helps determine their consciousness, a core item for introductory sociology.

Marx's key contribution to sociology then is that he focuses on the differential impact of the economic system on its members, the owners and the workers, and in the process he shows the alienative and disruptive features of this system. He may have overestimated the consequences, as Coser points out, seeing revolution as inevitable, but he did pinpoint the areas of conflict. Marx is important as a counterpoint to the function-

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* Lewis Coser, CONTINUITIES IN THE STUDY OF SOCIAL CONFLICT, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1967, pp. 137-152.

alists, who see the system as a mesh of interdependent parts. Marx points to the inequalities of control (economic and political) and the tensions that may be expected. Functionalists point to the fact that people are socialized to accept values and beliefs that legitimate inequality, deprivation and the like. Both perspectives have merit; it should not be a matter of either-or.

In introducing the conflict theory as deriving from Marx, we should be careful to point out that we are not bound to maintain the narrow focus on the inequality in power relations within the production system of society. Inequality of power may exist in political, religious, racial and other areas, independent of the economic. In other words, we can avoid the reductionism of Marx's theory while introducing students to its concerns for the way power relations shape our consciousness, and thus our behavior.

Again, it is important to remind students of Marx's methodology, of his use of records, and of personal observations in factories and working class neighborhoods. And we have here with Marx an excellent opportunity to distinguish between social theory and research on the one hand, and social action on the other. Further, we have the reality that in some cases, Marx's theory has been sacralized into an ideology as much as has functionalism. For if function analysis has led to assimilationism ideology urging individuals on to the American dream of individual mobility, so does an ideologized Marxism see revolution as the always and inevitable outcome of dehumanizing capitalism.

It is much easier to point to sociological research done from a functional perspective than from a conflict perspective, especially in the area of social stratification. Thus, for example, we have Abrahamson's

application of functional theory to stratification within organizations (differential rewards on major league baseball teams). Mark Abrahamson, "A Functional Theory of Organizational Stratification," SOCIAL FORCES, 1979, University of North Carolina Press. Vol. 58:1, pp. 128-145. And, both nationally and comparatively across nations, we have the occupational prestige studies done by Rossi and others.

The recent study by Blau and Blau which related high crime rates to racial and economic inequalities may be deductible from conflict theories. They note that:

"In a society founded on the principle 'that all men are created equal' economic inequalities rooted in ascribed positions violate the spirit of democracy and are likely to create, alienation, despair, and conflict." (p. 126) They hypothesize that racial socioeconomic inequalities are a major source of much criminal violence. (See "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime," American Sociological Review, 1982, Vol. 47 (February: 114-129).)

At a different level, it is worthwhile to inform the students about the difficulties of testing such broad ideas as the existence of a capitalist class, and the degree to which if one exists, it acts in concert to achieve some common set of goals. Zeitlin's work is certainly relevant here, in part because he makes clear the difficulties he has had in trying to test the hypothesis empirically. (See Maurice Zeitlin, "Corporate Ownership and Control: The Large Corporation and the Capitalist Class," in Zeitlin, AMERICAN SOCIETY, INC., 2nd Ed., 1977, pp. 233-75).

A further point here with regard to stratification: most students come to college believing in the American Dream; studies on individual mobility, occupational prestige and the like are easily absorbed by them.

They have more difficulty differentiating between dimensions of stratification a la Weber, and most difficulty with the possibility that differential access may be unfair in some ways.

A further word is in order here regarding the problem of mixing ideology, evaluation and policy with sociology. It has been my experience that students especially in the introductory courses tend to interpret just about everything we say in terms of their own value, belief, normative orientations. Weber understood that a long time ago, and gave us proper warning. The task of teaching then is not simply that of presenting theories, research methods, empirical studies and the like. It involves to an important degree continual efforts to distinguish sociological content from what students believe from family wisdom, common sense, or what they wish things were like, or what they don't like, or from what they would do if they were in a position to do something. If we use a straight lecture/multiple choice testing approach, we will not be aware of this important problem of student learning. Indeed, we can be easily misled by their ability to handle multiple choice tests into believing that they are absorbing a sociological approach. It is only in close encounters in the classroom and through written exams and term papers and the like, that we can help them distinguish between sociology and ideology (used broadly). I will return to this matter a bit later.

Socialization and the development of the self is essential to link the individual to the group. Probably more than any other part of an introductory course, a Meadian approach challenges the students' naive notions of their individualism. There are a variety of well-known studies that can be used: K. Davis' case of extreme isolation, Rene Spitz's "Hospitalism" study, and more recent studies by Jerome Kagan, "Do the First Two Years Matter? A

Conversation with Jerome Kagan," Saturday Review of Education, April 1973, pp. 41-42.

The other core area for an introductory course may be labeled broadly social/cultural change, and encompasses not only the basic theories and studies, but also, for me, the demographic transition and urbanism as a way of life. In my remarks here I will focus only on the demographic transition.

The population explosion ranks with the nuclear bomb as the greatest threats to the continued existence of human society. And both are the consequences of human inventiveness and thus fit within the broad area of social/cultural change. And both issues should be addressed in an introductory course. I have not given much thought as to how to deal with the nuclear bomb issue: the current anti-nuclear proliferation movement may be approached as a social movement. And The Survival Game, which I have used to help students see how deeply engrained certain values, beliefs and social structures are in their lives, can certainly be seen as relevant here.

The demographic issue can be addressed at both the micro and the macro levels. Further, it can be brought in in several places in the course, not only in dealing with Demography per se. For example, in discussion re socialization and gender roles, race, age and sex inequalities, and marriage and the family.

Students need to know the causes and consequences of the demographic transition. The present challenge to certain aspects of the theory adds

a dimension to the discussion. It is vital that they see how countries like Mexico, China and India are addressing the problems of population growth. Demographers have some of the best data available for classroom use; students can learn to see the implications of a continued high fertility rate for Mexico; educational demands, job demands, surplus labor, problems of energy, water and air pollution caused by rapid growth, as with Mexico City. Again, a demographic approach allows for examination of unplanned vs. guided change, vis., family planning programs. And again, there is the question of the relationship of family planning to such social inventions as the "pill, IUD, and new methods of medical abortion."

The population question also allows for comparative analysis, and for use of functional and conflict theories. Let me just note that most students are still planning to marry, and to have children. Why one or two? Why did people just a generation ago (their parents) decide to have three or four? What social variables may explain the dramatic change in family size?

How does the demographic transition to low birth and death rates relate to changing family structures and relationships? In a provocative paper, Sullivan suggests that the demographic transition in interaction with varying cultural patterns, is producing what has come to be called the crisis of contemporary family life. (See Teresa Sullivan, "Family Morality and Family Mortality: Speculations on the Demographic Transition," paper delivered at University of Notre Dame, Summer, 1981).

Sullivan points out that the family has changed from an all-encompassing institution to a highly specialized institution focused on love and nurturance. With our own parents now living into their 70's, and our siblings likely to live long lives, one or two children per couple may not only make sense economically, but equally as important, such limited fertility may be all that a couple can handle if they are serious about their efforts to retain and develop strong affectional relationships.

The evidence from history is that in the eras of high fertility and high mortality, there was much less probability of being able to develop close, affectional ties, especially over a long period of time. Clearly, a small number of people did achieve this goal, but the point of the demographic transition is that it has put the goal within the grasp of huge numbers of people for the first time in history.

Population data allow us to engage the students at a level that is of central concern to them: their own marriage and family plans. And it allows us to encourage them to ask questions about how such seemingly personal questions as whether and how many children to have, are raised and answered? There is also now implied the question of the societal consequences of individual decisions.

For too long, we have tended to overlook demography in our approach to introductory sociology. I would suggest that we may in fact want to turn to the demographers and the Census Bureau in particular for an increasing amount of data for introductory sociology.

On teaching the What of Sociology. I have already indicated that how we teach introductory sociology is as important as what we teach -- that is, if we believe that what we teach is important. Let me outline some of the things which I have found helpful to my efforts to get introductory students to see the sociological in the social worlds in which they live.

1. Games and simulations. One of the features of the 1971 ASA meeting in Denver was a day-long session devoted to "doing" Sim Soc, directed by Bill Gamson and attended by more than 100 persons. Toward the end of the afternoon, someone asked if Bill thought that students learned more sociology by doing games than by listening to lectures, or participating in discussions. Bill responded to the effect that he didn't know whether they learned more, but he was sure they enjoyed learning via games more. And he could find no fault with the idea that sudents enjoyed learning.

I have taken that message to heart. And I have found that students both enjoy and learn from games like Survival (Who Should Survive?) and Star Power and Sim Soc. For example, the Survival game can be linked to the Nuclear Holocaust threat. It also provides a great opportunity to help the students see how they have been socialized to certain values and social structures. In the discussion session that follows the playing of the game, questions about conflict and functional theory can be raised, and implications of their decisions examined. And, not least significant, we can use the game to show how predictable human behavior is. I have, during the past six years, kept the records of all classes which have played Who Should Survive? (an N of 11 now). Despite considerable variation in the way I have had them play the game (individuals playing the roles of the potential survivors or small groups of 4 each trying to decide), there has been remarkable consistency in the persons chosen to

survive. Five of the seven selected have always been the same, and two others have been chosen a majority of the time. Thus, the argument that the personality of the students chosen to play the roles makes the difference in the outcome can be shown to have only limited application.

2. Short papers on newspaper and magazine articles. This exercise is designed --

(a) to encourage students to read newspapers/magazines, and

(b) to help them see the sociological in the news of the day.

Students are required to find an article which relates to some major concept with which we are dealing at the time (stratification, deviance, Urbanism), and explain in a page or two the sociological relevance of the article. This is not an easy task for most students. Some find it very difficult to do more than merely summarize the article. All the more reason why we should be demanding that students demonstrate some ability to use sociology actively.

To reiterate, my focus is not on giving them a grade, but in finding ways to encourage them to think sociologically.

3. Essay exams. Again, I try to develop questions that will require that they show some ability to analyze social events sociologically. For example:

(a) Who are you? In Meadian terms, how have you come to be who you are?

(b) Discuss the statement "Anybody can make it in American society who is willing to work hard and has a little ability."

(c) Discuss the statement "Biology is destiny."

Increasingly, I have been giving students 10-12 essay questions to study, usually two days before the exam. I select 3 or 4 for them to write on at the exam time. I encourage them to study together. The purpose is to encourage them to learn as much sociology as they can. 10-12 essay questions can cover a great amount of territory.

4. The Term paper. Wilson has declared that the research paper is the most important activity of students in any sociology course. If he didn't say that, he should have -- since I would then be able to agree with him 100%.

I work on the term paper from the first day of class, suggesting possible topics, trying to relate concepts like social cohesion to dorm life, the structure of athletic teams, their work experience. At the same time, it is possible, indeed necessary, to introduce research methods into every discussion. Term papers are not book reviews, and usually not library research, although library research is a good portion of a good term paper (that is, an appropriate reveiw of the literature).

The term paper ranges in length from 5 to 20 pages, and is designed to be a synthetic experience for the students. They must bring to bear theories, concepts, research methods and prior empirical research on a question or problem related to their life experience. Thus, for example, I usually receive one or two papers a semester on work experience, with Blau's Dynamics of Bureaucracy as the key literature source. Students surprise themselves and their instructor with their ability to comprehend the relationship between informal and formal group structures, with factors

that increase or decrease cohesion, and with the consequences of different levels of cohesion.

On Teaching the Core This Way. I have a strong bias in favor of teaching introductory sociology in small classes, preferably with class size limited to 25 students. This kind of class size allows us to make the class a challenging intellectural experience for the students. It allows us to engage them in active learning, and it allows us to gain essential feedback on just how much of the core they are mastering, how they are relating to personal belief/value systems, and thus developing or not a sociological imagination.

In these times of decreasing enrollments, small sections of introductory sociology taught rigorously may yield more students at the advanced levels who see sociology as a worthwhile academic discipline. Even if this approach does not yield more students, I for one would be delighted to be able to enter a classroom for an advanced course in sociology with the knowledge that the students there can react intellectually to the names of Durkheim, Weber, Marx and Mead, to macro sociological concepts like organization, stratification and socialization and change, and to methods ranging from participant observation to survey research.

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